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'Turkish gas' or 'Greek gas'? The Role of Cypriot Energy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Turkish-Greek Conflict

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Abstract

In recent years, energy resources have become one of the most significant political assets a country can possess. It is accepted that international relations, including international conflicts, are driven by political, economic, geostrategic, and energy ambitions. Cyprus, the third largest island in the Mediterranean region, is influenced by tensions over the Turkish-Greek conflict and energy discoveries. More than a decade ago, the first offshore gas field, Aphrodite, was discovered offshore Cyprus, but its exploitation has been delayed despite its abundant gas export potential. Since 2018, plenty of major energy discoveries have underlined the island's extraordinary potential and its international role. The energy discoveries around Cyprus, and their subsequent exploitation, have faced persistent political obstacles, driven by the Turkish-Greek conflict over the country's division. The clash of Turkish-Greek differences is not new, as the Cyprus settlement issue has been pending since 1974, and its complexity makes it a geopolitically important conflict. The paper examines the geopolitical implications of Cypriot offshore natural gas exploration, focusing on how the Turkish-Greek conflict has shaped Cyprus's domestic and foreign energy policies. Using secondary sources, the research analyzes the legal, infrastructural, and diplomatic challenges surrounding the Aphrodite gas field and the broader Eastern Mediterranean energy landscapes. The findings reveal that unresolved territorial disputes and competing regional ambitions, particularly between Turkey and Greece, continue to hinder the development of a unified energy strategy. Cyprus's export prospects remain uncertain due to infrastructural constraints and persistent political fragmentation. The study recommends that future energy agreements prioritize inclusive dialogue between Turkish and Greek Cypriot authorities, supported by EU mediation, and investment in shared infrastructure to reduce dependency and foster regional cooperation. These steps are essential for transforming energy competition into collaboration and for stabilizing one of the EU's most strategically sensitive frontiers.

Keywords

Energy conflict; Greek influence; Natural gas production; Turkish influence

Introduction

Energy carriers play an important role in enabling the state to have the capacity to achieve its objectives. The characteristics of the states, their geopolitical position, and their relations with other states are crucial in international relations; these factors shape international events (Margitay *et al*., 2025). There are regions whose geopolitical importance has increased as they are energy-intensive. Natural gas fields containing large quantities of gas have been discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean for decades. Although such findings have been discussed in Cyprus since 2011, the issue has become more controversial because of the island's partitioned status since the 1980s, as the island hosts both the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), recognized by Turkey as an independent state but rejected internationally (Alecou, 2023).

The causes of international conflicts are often related to economic, political, and security issues. Over time, with the evolution of international affairs, these have been supplemented by conflicts arising from civilizational, ethnic, cultural, and religious differences (Huntington, 2019). Political opposition to the energy discoveries and subsequent exploitation in the Cyprus region has been fuelled by the Turkish-Greek dispute over the country's partition. The conflict between the Greeks and the Turkish Cypriots is not new, but its complexity makes it a major geopolitical issue, as the conflict has been ongoing since 1974 (Alecou, 2023). Cyprus possesses around 800 billion m^3 of natural gas, which is a significant quantity for the Republic of Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean region, given its geopolitical and energy-related importance in the context of international relations (Budzinska, 2024). Energy discoveries in and around Cyprus and their subsequent exploitation are largely constrained by the ongoing Turkish-Greek dispute over the island's division. The dispute is primarily driven by Turkey and Greece in their roles as guarantor states. However, the complexity is heightened by the fact that both Greece and the Republic of Cyprus are members of the European Union, which adds a supranational dimension to the conflict as they compete over the rights to extract and export natural gas from the island.

The article aims to examine how the Turkish-Greek conflict has impacted the natural gas exploration of Cyprus, which has affected the country's foreign and internal policies. Our research focuses on the main concerns regarding the significance of the natural gas of Cyprus for the energy policy of the two countries: (1) the impact of the dispute between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot parties over gas rights on the future settlement of Cyprus; and (2) the ability of Cyprus to sell its energy sources in the future.

Methodology

The aim of the research was to identify the background regarding the topic of energy policy and international conflicts, energy security, geopolitical importance of Cyprus, the Turkish-Greek conflicts over Cyprus and the future of energy resources in the region in question. To achieve research goals, the authors used a systematic approach and relied on academic articles using the databases like Scopus indexed journals and/or Google Scholar, therefore an important UN document (UNCLOS - the agreement ratified by Greece and Cyprus).

The facts and issues discovered during the analysis of literature served as the foundation for the formulation of the research question for the energy policy: Is it confirmed that the energy policy plays an important role in the global affairs and is there a link between natural resource depletion and energy security risks (Pang *et al*., 2024). An important aspect of the selection of the articles was to ensure that the Cyprus question on energy policy has generated an interest comprising highlighting Turkey's role and "*the cooperation in the field of energy adds an extra dimension to longstanding international disputes* (Grigoriadis, 2014, 127)". Several researchers (for example, Gökai, 2021; Maris, Flouros and Galariotis, 2022; Shifrinson, 2020) analyse Turkey's power status and explain that Turkey has new strategies to change the balance of power in the zone in question. Analysing the geopolitical aspect is important to explain the causes of conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean region (Proedrou, 2021).

Energy Policy and International Conflicts

The issue of energy supply is of particular importance nowadays, as any country needs energy carriers to function. Energy carriers are a key concept in energy policy, as their abundance or scarcity has an impact on national energy policies and security. Countries vary considerably in their interpretations of energy policy and energy security, as they are influenced by geopolitical and international relations (Kozera and Klaczynski, 2025).

The definition of energy policy and energy security

Each country defines energy security differently depending on its own characteristics and the availability or scarcity of energy sources. When a country has a large and diverse amount of energy resources, it adopts an energy policy that focuses on establishing economic relationships, and selling these resources internationally is considered an offensive approach to energy strategy (Colgan, 2009). Energy plays a crucial role in equipping a state with the capabilities needed to achieve its goals. In international relations, the determining factors are the states' characteristics, geopolitical positions, and their relationships with other countries, which influence global events (Melnyk, Demkiv and Salamatin, 2024). Energy security is a policy area having strategic importance in the international arena, as ensuring energy supply can have an impact on a country's economy, competitiveness, and domestic stability (Dannreuther, 2016).

In other words, it is not only the states with large amounts of energy resources that play a significant role in energy policy. As a result of this transformation, some countries have become major players in the long-distance energy sector, despite the absence of significant energy resources. Known as transit countries, they act as a natural link between those countries with energy resources and those that need them (Tsakiris, 2019).

The importance of geopolitical position in international relations - Eastern-Mediterranean in focus

Geographical location is unquestionably important for a country or region in international affairs, as it has an impact on a nation's present and future in terms of politics and the economy. Historical occurrences can demonstrate that some states are more powerful than others in particular geographic areas. As a result, some states are in

a stronger geopolitical position than others (Zhang, 2022). In alliance systems, states are often categorized as 'small' or 'large' powers. Due to their geopolitical characteristics or natural resources that can become strategically important in international relations, either within the region or beyond (Marshall, 2021).

The significance of the Eastern Mediterranean region has increased since the discovery of energy resources, particularly natural gas deposits. The countries in the region (i.e. Egypt, Israel, Lebanon), as well as Turkey and Greece, have the greatest interest in the natural gas of the Eastern Mediterranean because Greece is considered the gateway to Europe, where Turkey's geopolitical proximity, energy policy relations with Russia and the Middle East, and its valuable contribution to the European Union's natural gas supply pose a real challenge for Greece (Csorba, 2022). In the Eastern Mediterranean region, the energy conflict over Cypriot natural gas involves Turkey and Greece. This issue has evolved beyond a bilateral Greek-Turkish dispute, as foreign policy and energy considerations have made it much more complex in the last decade (Marshall, 2021).

Geopolitical Importance of Cyprus

Cyprus is an island nation located at the crossroads of multiple political and cultural spheres in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Cyprus, a member of the European Union and geographically part of Asia, has been affected by many cultures, as evidenced by its history. Political life in Cyprus is shaped primarily by the Turkish-Greek conflict and the exploitation of natural resources in the gas fields of the region. The region's deposits offer economic opportunities, but Cypriot natural gas also represents a new source of conflict for the European Union, Turkey, and the Eastern Mediterranean. For Cyprus, the presence of energy resources signifies economic and regional strengthening on the international stage. However, the country's development is limited due to the Turkish-Greek division.

The role of the European Union has become more significant since the accession of Cyprus, as the southern part of the country found real allies within the European Union against Turkey. Within the Union, Cyprus holds decision-making power, which has been used against Turkey to serve its own interests. For energy policy reasons, Cyprus is also important to other political forces as Russia and the United States (Tzogopoulos, 2023). For Russia, especially in the current international situation, the question that matters is how much gas will be piped to the European Union from the Middle East via transit of Turkey, or from the Eastern Mediterranean or Cyprus via Greece (Tzogopoulos, 2023). For both Greece and Turkey, the strategic issue of serving as a transit country for Cypriot natural gas is crucial (Tsakiris, 2023). In summary, the geopolitical significance of Cyprus is shaped by the energy resource deposits in the region and by the Turkish-Greek conflict over the country's partition, so we can define this question as a major and constantly evolving issue in international affairs.

The exclusive economic zone of Cyprus

Since 2011, Cyprus's geopolitical and energy policy significance has been crucial in both regional and global events, following the discovery of substantial deep-sea natural gas reserves in the exclusive economic zone off the southern coast of the island (Kacziba,

2021). Cyprus possesses approximately 818 billion m^3 of natural gas, which is a significant amount given the island nation's low consumption (Budzinska, 2024). However, it is important to emphasize that while this is a substantial resource for Cyprus, it cannot compete with the world's largest energy holders, such as Russia (see Table 1) or other Eastern Mediterranean countries like Egypt.

Table 1: Gas field discoveries of Cyprus

Name of the gas fields	*Date of discovery*	*Gas amount (billion m^3)*
Aphrodite	2011	~141.5
Calypso	2018	~181.2
Glaucus	2019	~141.5 – 227.0
Talos	2020	~283.1
Cronos-1	2022	~70.5

Source: Budzinska (2024, 20)

Five significant natural gas fields have been discovered around the island nation, leading to the designation of 13 blocks within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The largest discoveries in the area are the Aphrodite (Block 12), Calypso (Block 6), Glaucus (Block 10), Talos (Block 6), and Cronos-1 (Block 6) gas fields (Budzinska, 2024).

The history of the Turkish-Greek conflict over Cyprus

The geopolitical location of Cyprus has a regional dimension, affected by the Turkish-Greek conflict. To understand the problem, it is necessary to look back at the history of Cyprus. Ottoman troops occupied the island in the 1570s and remained there for centuries, contributing to the formation of a Turkish minority. Over the following centuries, thanks to settlements, a Turkish minority emerged alongside the Greeks on the island. In 1878, Cyprus came under British rule, and Cyprus primarily fought for unification with Greece (Alecou, 2023). In 1952, both Turkey and Greece joined NATO, but the international community supported the unification of Cyprus with Greece, which was rejected by Turkey and Britain (Axt, 2021). In 1974, with support from Athens, some military officers staged a coup against Archbishop Makarios, and the island's unification with Greece was declared, prompting Turkey to authorize military intervention (Axt, 2021). After these events, Turkey occupied several areas and began to draw a line separating the Turks in the north from the Greeks in the south.

The real separation took place in 1983 when the Turkish side established the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which has been recognized as an independent state by Turkey only (Tsakiris, 2023). Greece abandoned the idea of unification and emphasized the illegitimacy of the TRNC, but instead advocated for Cyprus to join the European Union (Kacziba, 2021). As a result, Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004 without reunification of the two parts of Cyprus, despite the Turks voting for it, but the Greek Cypriot population voted against it (Haritos, 2023). Since the discovery of the Aphrodite field in 2011, the two sides have been unable to agree on key issues, owing to disagreements over energy policy, and have abandoned reunification efforts.

The main cause of the poor neighbourly relations is clearly the Cypriot conflict. Both past and present events show that the role of the Eastern Mediterranean has gained

international importance, driven by the question of control of the energy resources in the region. This issue has become a sensitive point in the political life of both guarantor states and Cyprus, particularly since 2010, as Turkey has not signed the international convention that declares which parts of the sea belong to which state (Haritos, 2023). Given the ongoing disputes and the lack of consensus on maritime delineation, this paper recommends that parties submit the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for legal clarification and proper boundary determination, which could serve as a foundation for resolving the conflict peacefully and equitably.

The real causes of the Turkish-Greek dispute

Both sides, Turkey and Greece, have demonstrated their willingness to cooperate on several occasions, but each positive step is followed by a negative one. The Turkish Cypriot side does not recognize the rights of the Republic of Cyprus to exercise its exclusive economic zone claims and has politically opposed foreign companies (American, Italian, French) conducting offshore drilling operations (Haritos, 2023). While the Republic of Cyprus is a sovereign state under international law, the Turkish Cypriot administration contests its jurisdiction over certain maritime zones, citing unresolved territorial disputes and the lack of a comprehensive settlement since 1974.

Greece bases its arguments on Article 47 of UNCLOS (the agreement ratified by Greece and Cyprus), which provides that the EEZ is to be no more than 350 miles from the baselines of the island (UNCLOS, 1982). It is important to note that Turkey has not ratified this maritime convention, UNCLOS, so there is no clear stance as to what the procedure for resolving the dispute should be. The Turkish Cypriots believe that the revenues from the gas fields should be shared equally between the two sides (Stravrinides, 2023). However, the Greek side replied that if Turkey ratified the convention, they would guarantee the Turkish Cypriot side a share of the revenues from hydrocarbon extraction (Kacziba, 2021). Turkey has repeatedly entered areas claimed by the Republic of Cyprus as part of its exclusive economic zone and carried out illegal exploratory drilling, as well as made unrecognized claims to its own EEZ, as if Turkey had the right to conduct such activities in the EEZ of Cyprus (Stanic and Karbuz, 2021). The European Union, the United States, Russia, and the countries of the region all condemned Turkey's actions and called for respect for the sovereign rights of Cyprus (Kacziba, 2021). In light of the ongoing legal ambiguity and repeated violations, this paper recommends that the dispute be submitted to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for impartial adjudication and formal delineation of maritime boundaries.

The energy issue in Cyprus is closely linked to the European Union, as Greece, a member European Union, is promoting the transition of natural gas from Cyprus to Europe. A project to connect these two destinations to the gas reserves of the island of Cyprus, called the EastMed pipeline, is already underway (Ellinas, 2022). It could stretch from Cyprus through Greece to Italy, strengthening links between the European countries. The European Union has strategic reasons for promoting infrastructure between Cyprus and its member states. The European Union aims to ensure that Cypriot gas does not pass through Turkey to reach the European region, thereby reducing dependence on the natural gas of both Turkey and Russia (Ellinas, 2022). Currently, Europe is heavily

dependent on Russian and Eastern Mediterranean energy resources, which could be reduced by the EastMed gas pipeline (Csorba, 2022).

The position of Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean region

As Cyprus' energy research affects the energy policies of many countries in the region, its future is rooted in its links with the Eastern Mediterranean. Research on the gas fields of the Mediterranean has been stalled for decades, despite discoveries dating back to the 1970s. The region has gained global attention through the large discoveries and extraction of gas over the past decade, which could make it a key hydrocarbon exporter in energy policy.

Table 2: Offshore gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean

State	*Name of the gas field*	*Amount (billion m^3)*
Egypt	Zohr	849,5
	West Nile Delta	141,5
Israel	Leviathan	622,9
	Tamar	305,8
Libya	Bouri	99,1
Cyprus	Aphrodite	141,5
	Calypso	181,2
	Glaucus	141,5 - 227
	Talos	283,1

Source: Ellinas (2022, 15)

The discovery of the Leviathan in Israel in 2010 and the Zohr in Egypt in 2015 have revived interest in the gas potential of the Eastern Mediterranean (Stanic and Karbuz, 2021). Since then, the region has produced several notable hydrocarbon fields, and more are likely to emerge. Table 2 shows the abundance of gas in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Egyptian Zohr field, around 850 billion m^3; the Israeli Leviathan field, 620 billion $m^{3;}$ and the Talos field in Cyprus contains approximately 280 billion m^3 and has significant export potential for natural gas (ElBassoussy, 2019). With the discovery of several large gas fields through successful offshore drilling, Cyprus is playing an important role in the Eastern Mediterranean, has become increasingly prominent in regional energy policy.

Although hydrocarbon exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean may seem straightforward, geopolitical conflicts (e.g., the Turkish-Greek conflict in Cyprus, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) are a permanent challenge. To trade natural gas effectively, regional cooperation is essential. Countries need to overcome geopolitical issues to become potential energy partners for the European Union's gas supply. The European Union's gas supply is a critical issue, especially in the wake of the energy crisis caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Bashir, 2023). Experts believe the solution is closer than expected, as numerous gas fields discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean in recent years could contribute to the diversification of gas supplies of the European Union. Since 2022, the European Council has signed several new agreements to increase gas flow to the European Union, with Azerbaijan in particular and Turkey as a transit country (Ellinas, 2022). The significance of the Mediterranean, particularly Cyprus, has been recognized

globally, as it holds substantial energy resources that could solve certain problems. The primary problem, which can only be addressed by regional cooperation, is the absence of developed infrastructure between Cyprus and the European Union. Other significant countries in the region, such as Israel and Egypt, see potential in the European market, with Greece's cooperation being key (Kentas, 2023).

The Future of the Energy Resources of Cyprus and the Turkish-Greek Conflict

The development of the Cypriot dispute is also a geopolitical issue, as the dynamics of the Eastern Mediterranean have grown into an internationally crucial topic. Energy is a vital matter for both parties, as energy resources are considered significant political assets in global affairs, the more energy a country has, the more influential it becomes on the international stage. It is also important to point out that the disputes stemming from the Cyprus settlement have earned Greece the support of the European Union and the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, while for Turkey, they have led to political isolation and marginalisation (Melnyk, Demkiv, and Salamatin, 2024).

The future of the conflict can be represented by two possible scenarios. The Parties may decide to end unilateral actions in the region and to engage in negotiations for temporary agreements, ultimately achieving a bilateral agreement on rights and obligations (Melnyk, Demkiv and Salamatin, 2024). The second scenario involves each side pursuing its own political and economic interests without regard to the other's perspective or the potential consequences (Budzinska, 2024). This second scenario is more likely to develop in the future, in view of the course of the dispute so far, and for several reasons (Grigoriadis, 2022). Nevertheless, projections to maintain peace on the island are being made, although the dispute over the exploration and exploitation of Cyprus's EEZ continues to complicate the situation, with no prospects for further negotiations at present.

For any sustainable settlement, the parties would need to agree on the rights and obligations relating to the extraction of natural gas in Cyprus. The two parties shall share the extraction rights and shall jointly perform the associated operational tasks (Budzinska, 2024). A joint committee to oversee the implementation and settlement of disputes, oversee the extraction procedures, and the allocation of revenue shall be set up (Tahmid *et al*., 2023). If necessary, they may seek the assistance of an international court or mediator, such as the European Union itself, in resolving any disputes that arise. The most important aspect of the agreement is that the Parties should jointly discuss all issues relating to natural gas extraction and reach unanimous decisions on the relevant areas of cooperation (Tahmid *et al*., 2023). This could allow Cypriot natural gas to flow toward both Turkey and Greece, enabling them to jointly become a potential energy bridge between the Middle East and the European Union.

However, the chances of such a solution being adopted in international relations are slim. It would not be politically or diplomatically advantageous for the parties to exercise joint extraction rights on energy resources. Additionally, it would raise further issues, particularly since Turkey does not recognize UNCLOS, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, under which several conditions would be defined in this bilateral agreement (Bashir, 2023). As a result, tension between the two parties is likely to

intensify. The main concern for the divided island remains the pursuit of its political and economic interests, on which the Republic of Cyprus has already launched several projects. In terms of the definition of maritime borders and territorial sovereignty, it is clear that both parties have their own agendas (Grigoriadis, 2022).

Diplomatic negotiations and international mediation are essential to resolve the conflict. The EU and the States concerned have an interest in putting pressure on Turkey to respect Cyprus's rights, possibly through further sanctions against Turkey (AlRubaei-Cubukcuoglu and Serhat, 2023). The Republic of Cyprus has the support necessary to begin resource extraction in opposition to Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. However, since Turkey does not recognise the relevant international laws, it is unlikely that additional sanctions or international pressure will influence its position. Therefore, in addition to sanctions, sustained diplomatic engagement and a legal resolution mechanism, such as submitting the dispute to the International Court of Justice, should be pursued to ensure a peaceful and lasting settlement.

In the future, the most important questions for Cyprus are which gas pipelines will be built in the Eastern Mediterranean, how it will be able to sell its gas upon extraction, which countries the energy carriers will be transferred through, and where it will arrive. Plans for the post-harvest flow of Cypriot gas have been underway for years, with the main project being the EastMed gas pipeline, which is of strategic importance to the region as a whole (Ellinas, 2022). The construction of the pipeline has received significant support from the United States and Europe, provided that the natural gas of Cyprus is delivered to the European Union via Greece as a transit country. It is important to note that Turkey continues to fight for its rights over extraction and may have an impact on the development of the EastMed gas pipeline. Moreover, it is important that the costs of the construction may be much higher than expected, as gas costs are also rising. In the absence of gas transport infrastructure, the European Union must make important decisions that may be costly.

In this regard, Cyprus has other possibilities to transport its gas deposits. Energy policymakers see potential in a floating power plant to be built between Israel and Cyprus (Troulis, 2019). This LNG terminal would be able to handle 25 billion m^3 of natural gas per year, which is about one-eighth of the current Russian supplies (AlRubaei-Cubukcuoglu and Serhat, 2023). The issue is particularly sensitive for Israel and Cyprus, as the construction of a gas pipeline is risky in the current international situation. Regarding LNG, Egypt also offers an opportunity for Cyprus, namely the connection of an existing LNG terminal, with the first agreements on this matter reached back in 2018 (AlRubaei-Cubukcuoglu and Serhat, 2023). In the future, the Turkish-Greek conflict may have an impact on these plans as Turkey continues to conduct illegal exploratory activities in the EEZ of Cyprus, causing diplomatic conflicts with Greece and the European Union. Events in the coming years will have a decisive impact on the issue of reunification of the two parts of the island, as discoveries may lead to further disputes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In recent years, the issue of the energy resources of Cyprus has become a global political issue, not only relevant to the country but also to the Eastern Mediterranean region,

Turkey, and the European Union. By defining the concepts of energy policy and international conflicts, it is evident that the two concepts go hand in hand. Energy plays a key role in enabling countries to achieve their goals, facilitating trade and fostering strategic relationships on the international scene. The geopolitical position of a country significantly influences its global perception, as certain regions may be richer in energy resources, causing inter- and intra-regional dependencies.

For over 50 years, Cyprus has been divided under the influence of Turkey and Greece, resulting in a Turkish-Greek conflict, in which both Turkish and Greek Cypriots have been seeking independence. The conflict entered a new phase in 2011 with the discovery of the first natural gas field, the Aphrodite gas field. Turkey's geopolitical role is significant, particularly as a regional energy actor. It has a key relation with the European Union and Azerbaijan, with several natural gas pipelines running through it, facilitating energy transport to the European Union. Turkey is a vital strategic partner for the European Union despite the many conflicts caused by the Turkish-Greek conflict, as the European Union is not in a position to cut off its energy relations with Turkey. Meanwhile, Greece has sought in recent years to deepen its relationships with regions interested in tapping natural gas deposits of Cyprus, sidelining its rival, Turkey.

The conflict has been complicated because the blocks where natural gas fields were discovered are within the exclusive economic zone under Greek jurisdiction, which the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus does not accept, as it has not ratified Article 47 of UNCLOS. The Greek Cypriot side guarantees that the Turkish side will only deliver its share of the gas wealth if the agreement is ratified and signed by the Turkish side of Cyprus. A Cyprus-Greece alignment has emerged in the region, aiming to supply the European Union with natural gas via LNG terminals and the EastMed pipeline. Although this connection benefits all parties, regional conflicts hinder this cooperation. The European Union would benefit from the flow of Cypriot, Egyptian, and Israeli natural gas through Greece to the region. However, competing interests between Turkey and Greece complicate the efforts of the European Union. Turkey aims to transport the gas itself, creating significant dependency for the European Union while enhancing its own regional role as an energy distributor, potentially becoming a central gas hub in the global energy market.

In order to resolve the ongoing dispute over offshore gas in Cyprus, this paper recommends a multi-layered approach that combines legal, diplomatic, and infrastructural strategies. While submitting the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) remains a legally sound option, it is important to acknowledge that such a move would require mutual consent and may not be politically feasible, especially given Turkey's strategic role in the EU's energy supply. Therefore, diplomatic negotiations should be prioritized, with the European Union and the United Nations facilitating structured dialogue between the parties. Rather than exerting direct pressure on Turkey, the EU could adopt a more pragmatic approach by encouraging regional cooperation and offering platforms for inclusive energy dialogue. This would allow Turkey to participate without undermining the EU's energy interests, while still promoting transparency and stability.

A joint energy development framework could also be explored, involving both Greek and Turkish Cypriot representatives. Such a mechanism would ensure equitable revenue sharing and reduce the risk of unilateral actions. Although full political recognition remains unresolved, technical cooperation on energy matters could serve as a confidence-building measure. Infrastructure development is another critical area where collaboration is essential. The EU could support a multilateral energy corridor project that connects Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and other regional actors such as Israel and Egypt. However, this should be framed as an economic opportunity rather than a political alignment, to avoid alienating key stakeholders.

Finally, while sanctions have been used in the past, their effectiveness is limited and may conflict with broader EU interests. Instead, the EU and other international actors should consider incentive-based diplomacy, such as investment packages, trade facilitation, or energy partnerships, conditioned on constructive engagement and respect for international norms. This approach may prove more effective in encouraging cooperation and long-term stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The analysis presented in this study indicates that the question of the offshore gas in Cyprus is not only a matter of conflicting interests between Turkey and Greece, but also of foreign policy objectives, as both seek greater regional influence. In addition, the lack of adequate infrastructure for gas transport is a point of contention between the two countries. The coming years will be decisive in determining the energy-related agreements they forge and which party can establish the necessary connections for gas transportation through their territory. Resolving the offshore gas dispute in Cyprus requires a multi-layered approach. Diplomatic negotiations should be prioritized, with the EU and UN facilitating structured dialogue among all parties. Rather than applying direct pressure on Turkey, the EU should encourage regional cooperation and create platforms for inclusive energy discussions. This approach would allow Turkey's participation without compromising EU energy interests, while promoting transparency and stability.

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Authors' Declarations and Essential Ethical Compliances

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Collected the data	Yes	Yes
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